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UNIT HISTORY

644TH BOMBARDMENT SQDN (L)

APO 140

UNITED STATES ARMY

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COVERING THE PERIOD 1 JAN.'45 TO 31 JAN.'45

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I. ORGANIZATION:

The month of January seemed to be packed with activity. Intense Ground training and flight experience both for day and night fighting continued to hold the limelight. New tactics, methods and operations were mastered.

Along with the training program there were the regular tactical day missions in which we played a very important part in driving the enemy back. The organization is functioning smoothly. Morale is high in face of poor living conditions and in spite of extra duties.

Lt. Charles Bowen was transferred to the IX Tactical Command.

Lt. Joseph B. Kenny was transferred to the 646th Bomb Squadron, 410th Bomb Group.

Lt. Randall, Lt. Newmark, S/Sgt Blevens, S/Sgt Paynter who had completed sixty-five missions were transferred to the 591st Replacement Pool for that well-deserved trip home.

Cpl Raleigh Patton was transferred to the 397th Bomb Group.

Sgt Guy Williams and Pfc Felix Wysowski were evacuated to the 203rd General Hospital. Lt. Roy Welsh is on DS to Reclassification Center #1 Châlons sur Marne for an indefinite period.

1st Lt. Gardner Taylor, Cpl Polopoli, Cpl Poling and Cpl Marion Fitch were assigned to the Squadron.

The opportunity for Air Corps Personnel to visit at the front for ten days has ripened into an actuality.

Captain R.F. Valtr, Lt. Mines, Sgt Shahoda and Pfc Jennings were on DS to the XXIX Tactical Air Command.

Captain Jack M. Copeland, Lt. Richard Jones, Sgt Yost and Sgt William Jones were on DS to XXIX Tactical Air Command.

Major Jack W. Tyler and S/Sgt M.J. Curry were on DS to the XIX Tactical Air Command for one month.

Captain Edwin Osborne, Lt. Dupont, S/Sgt Osgood and S/Sgt L. Lee were on DS to XIX Tactical Air Command, Third Army.

Captain Edwin W. Turner was on DS to Station #524 in the United Kingdom where he was in charge of the rest home for one month.

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I. CONT'D, PROMOTIONS:

Our Commanding Officer Robert Paulson received his Lieutenant Colonelcy on January 1, 1945. Congratulations were in order for the Commanding Officer of the "Best Damn Bomb Squadron in the World". A get-together was held in the Officer's Club to celebrate the happy occasion. Colonel Robert Hughey, the Base Commander, Lt. Colonel McKeever and Lt. Colonel Paul came over to pay their respects.

Four Second Lieutenants were promoted to the grade of First Lieutenant. All are flying Officers: Lt. Cook, Lt. Benson, Lt. Lamond and Lt. Knight are sporting the silver bars.

During the month there were forty-one Enlisted Men promoted to various grades.

II. STRENGTH:

As of 31 January 1945, there were seventy-five Officers assigned and one attached. There were 311 Enlisted Men assigned to the Organization for the same period.

III. LOSSES:

With all the tactical targets attacked and low-level missions over strongly defended enemy territory the Squadron experienced no losses. However 2nd Lt. Richard Howlste and S/Sgt Robert T. Jex were wounded in action over Germany. Both are well on the road to recovery.

Bombardier-Navigator Lt. G.C. Jones had minor cuts from plexiglass while flying over Germany on a low-level mission.

IV. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to Lt. Colonel Robert Paulson, Captain Robert F. Valtr, Captain Edwin L. Osborne, 1st Lt. Paul Randall, 1st Lt. Louis Newmark, S/Sgt Joseph Fisher and S/Sgt William Vinerek.

Twenty members of the organization received Air Medals. Four received one bronze Oak Leaf Cluster. Five received the Second Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster and two were awarded the Third Oak Leaf Cluster.

The presentation of these awards is a true reflection of the sterling quality of personnel in the 644th Bomb Squadron.

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V. MISSIONS:

Finishing the old year in a "Blaze of Glory" the Group went off to a flying start for the new year. Overcoming unfavorable weather conditions at enemy held Laroche the Group dropped 34 tons of bombs on the primary blanketing intersections, cutting highways and blasting buildings in the target area.

All of the targets for the month were of a tactical nature and concentrated on stopping the flow of material to the enemy and aiding the ground forces in mopping up retreating elements of the German army.

At Clervoux and Mayen, both Communication centers, direct hits were scored on highways and rail yards with excellent results, stopping Nazi movement Eastward from the Bulge. Mayen was a particularly important target inasmuch as it paralyzed rail movement of supplies from the Western front to the Eastern front.

At Stienbruck Captain Russel Fellers and Bombardier Navigator G.G. Jones bombed a Railroad Bridge with excellent results stopping traffic in that area.

A Road junction at Gerolstein was bombed with good results by Captain Fellers and Bombardier Navigator G.G. Jones. As Box Leader Captain Fellers had unusual conditions to meet. The Pathfinder had aborted and with weather solidly overcast he and Lt. G.G. Jones Bombardier Navigator led the Box to the target using instruments all the way. It was an achievement in accuracy.

Of particular interest was the first low level attack the Group made. The attack was made necessary because the long lines of convoys emanating out of the bulge area toward inner Germany. Our aircraft had bombed bridges and road junctions and had trapped huge convoy lines, some over five miles in length. In an effort to move material to the Russian front there was a great exodus from the Western front.

Six of our aircraft led by Captain Russel Fellers and Navigated by Lt. G.G. Jones and accompanied by the two Richardsons, Lt. J.A., and Lt. F.E., together with Lt. Kuver, all members of the 644th Squadron, dropped frag bombs and then opened up with machine guns. The convoy was completely taken by surprise and the object of the mission was achieved. All returned in face of close flak fire.

Lt. Colonel Paulson our Commanding Officer and Lt. Shumate, Bombardier-Navigator led the Group to Hallschlieg a road junction. There was an excellent pattern blanketing all roads and buildings with the weight of the attack centering on the town itself.

Again at Stadtkyll Colonel Paulson and Lt. Shumate led the Group to the target, a road junction. Bombs blanketed the highways and road junction with excellent results.

Captain Walker as Box leader and Lt. Kessler Bombardier-Navigator led the box to Haleschrieb, a road junction which was destroyed thereby closing one more avenue of escape before the fleeing enemy.

In the over-all picture the 644th Bomb Squadron can point to

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V. MISSIONS, cont'd:

specific missions where they stopped the forward movement of the enemy, trapping and destroyed him in retreat.

VI. STATION LIFE:

January was a cold month for our Group. Nine inches of snow on the ground and icicles on our tents coupled with a fuel shortage tested our resistance to disease. More specifically, it was twenty-six degrees below freezing. A great many of us toyed with the idea of cutting down a nearby forest. Toward the end of the month we received permission from the French Government to cut down trees of no value about three miles distant from the camp. This was a great aid inasmuch as all our water had turned to ice and shaving was impossible.

During periods in between missions the Special Service Officer brought movies to our Squadron which proved quite entertaining. He also showed the films in the afternoon for those who were off duty. Our daily Liberty runs continued to go to a nearby town each evening.

Day passes into Paris were permitted in addition to the forty-eight hour pass to Paris. Ground personnel being allowed to visit Paris for one day.

To alleviate the crowded conditions in Paris but with the intention of giving members of the organization a rest, a hotel was taken over in a nearby town of fair size in which a two day pass provided a change and allowed a much needed rest. This was provided at no expense, C.M. rations being served.

The Officers had a dance in a village close to the base where Nurses from a hospital near Paris were invited. It was a genuine pleasure to hear the girls speak English and from all reports, a "Good time was had by all".

The Enlisted Men who were gunners had a party in their Club and we're still hearing stories about the "carryings on".

Each Wednesday a talk was given to the personnel on the War situation. These lectures were given by the Group Ground Liaison Officer and the Squadron Assistant Intelligence Officer. The attendance at the forums is an indication of the keen interest the men have in the progress of the war.

Speaking of the War reminds us that we are doing one hour of close order drill each week. One must visualize this taking place in arctic boots, wool coats with full field uniform on an iced hardstand to appreciate the great importance that is placed in this ritual.

The base had a U.S. Alert practice in which battle stations were given. Hardly a day went by that we didn't have two or three red alerts. However we only had one enemy strafe job which resulted in no damage.

And so this rounds out another month's history of the "Best Damn Light Bomb Squadron in the World".

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- LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT W. PAULSON -

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